

building assistance on the protection of intellectual property rights.

President Bush commended President Macapagal-Arroyo for her steadfast leadership in pursuing needed economic reforms in the Philippines, noting in particular her “Strong Republic” agenda aimed at rooting out corruption, expanding economic opportunity, and alleviating poverty. President Bush welcomed President Arroyo’s determination to pursue reforms in revenue collection, energy privatization, and intellectual property rights protection. They further noted their shared hope that current and continuing reforms will strengthen the Philippines’ eligibility for participation in the President’s Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) in the future.

The two Presidents highlighted the remarkable contributions of Filipinos and Filipino-Americans to American economic life. Recognizing the important role that the over 7 million overseas Filipino workers play in the Philippine and global economies, President Bush announced that the United States is launching a project to facilitate the flow of remittances from Filipino workers around the world back to the Philippines. The two leaders agreed that this project would improve the lives of millions of Filipinos by lowering the costs of remittance transactions and making it easier for funds to flow to the Philippines from the United States and around the world.

The two Presidents reviewed with pride the contributions made by Philippine World War II veterans who gave so much in defense of freedom. President Bush announced his intention to support legislation extending new benefits for Commonwealth Army veterans and guerrillas who lawfully reside in the United States. He also announced continuing efforts to improve medical care for Filipino veterans in the Philippines by providing medical equipment to the Veterans Memorial Medical Center in Quezon City in the 2004 fiscal year.

Presidents Bush and Macapagal-Arroyo looked forward to the May 20 signing by Secretaries Powell and Ople of agreements on assistance for Mindanao, law enforcement cooperation, and science and technology co-

operation, noting that cooperation in these three areas is a priority for both countries.

President Bush was pleased to accept President Macapagal-Arroyo’s invitation to pay a reciprocal visit to the Philippines when he travels to Southeast Asia for APEC in 2003. The two leaders agreed that to maintain momentum in the bilateral relationship, other senior U.S. officials will travel to Manila in the coming months, beginning soon with Secretary of Energy Abraham and continuing thereafter with senior officials from the Department of Treasury and the Agency for International Development (AID).

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks at a State Dinner Honoring President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo of the Philippines

May 19, 2003

Welcome. Madam President, Attorney Arroyo, it is a high honor for Laura and me to welcome you and host you at the White House. Madam President, I know you attended college here in Washington, so perhaps I ought to say welcome back or, as they say at Georgetown, *Hoya Saxa*. [Laughter]

With your visit, the Philippines and the United States affirm our strong friendship, our common commitment to fighting terror, and our shared determination to promote freedom.

Our nations are natural partners. We are connected by an ocean, united by a shared history, and sustained by the bonds of family and culture. More than 2 million Americans have family ties to the Philippines. And some are with us tonight, and you’re welcome. Filipino Americans strengthen America’s culture, our economy, and our Government. And we are privileged that they call this country their home.

The United States and the Philippines are also joined by common values, especially the value of human freedom. And when freedom comes under attack, our countries respond.

Madam President, you’ve been a fierce fighter of terrorism in your own country. You’ve earned the respect of the American people for your resolve. And after September

the 11th, you were one of the first leaders to contact me and express your strong support for the war against terror, and you have not wavered.

The President was also a strong and persuasive voice on the need to disarm Saddam Hussein and to liberate the Iraqi people.

Madam President, for your leadership and for your friendship, I thank you.

Seventeen years ago, the Filipino people restored their nation's democratic tradition and inspired lovers of freedom across the globe. In the years since, the Philippines has emerged as a stronger and more confident nation. The Philippines is building its prosperity on the foundation of markets and building its future on a foundation of democracy. These commitments are opening new opportunities for the Filipino people and setting a hopeful example for other nations traveling the road to freedom.

President Arroyo is playing a large role in her nation's success. Her bold and determined leadership has opened a new chapter in the friendship between our countries and is responsible for revitalizing our strong alliance.

In his last poem, Jose Rizal, one of the founders of the Filipino independence, referred to his native land as the "Pearl of the Orient Seas." More than a century later, this "pearl" is admired the world over for its beauty, its progress, and its wonderful people.

Madam President, it will be my pleasure to visit the Philippines later this year, with you as my host. And Laura and I and the American people are honored to have you and your husband as our guests here tonight. Would you please join me in a toast to the enduring friendship between the Philippines and the United States.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:33 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Jose Miguel Arroyo, husband of President Macapagal-Arroyo; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

**Message to the Congress
Transmitting a Report on Trade and
Investment Policy for Sub-Saharan
Africa and Implementation of the
African Growth and Opportunity Act**
May 19, 2003

To the Congress of the United States:

Consistent with title I of the Trade and Development Act of 2000, I am providing a report prepared by my Administration entitled "2003 Comprehensive Report on U.S. Trade and Investment Policy for Sub-Saharan Africa and Implementation of the African Growth and Opportunity Act."

George W. Bush

The White House,
May 19, 2003.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 20.

**Remarks on the Healthy Forests
Initiative**
May 20, 2003

Thanks for coming, and good morning. I welcome you all to the White House, and I'm pleased all of you could be here to support the preservation of a great American treasure, our forests.

Nine months ago, I stood at the scene of Squires Peak fire in Oregon. On one side of a dirt road, where small trees and underbrush had been removed before the fire rolled through, the forest was green and alive. On the other side of the road, where a similar thinning project had been stalled by lawsuits, the landscape was charred, and the trees looked like matchsticks. The contrast between these two sides of the forest was startling, and it was tragic.

Active forest management could have saved both areas. It could have saved millions more acres across America from the devastation of severe forest fires and insect damage. Yet, for too many years, bureaucratic tangles and bad forest policy have prevented foresters from keeping our woodlands healthy and safe. The cost to America has been high, in the loss of lives and property and in the destruction of woodlands and wildlife.